DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 312 054 PS 018 305

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TITLE Secondary Education in Kuwait: The Dual System.
PUB DATE 30 Mar 89
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, March 27-31, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Admission; Comparative Analysis; Educational Innovation; *Educational Objectives; *Educational Policy; Foreign Countries; Program Descriptions; *Secondary Education; *Secondary School Curriculum; *Student Evaluation; *Teaching Methods; Traditional Schools
IDENTIFIERS *Kuwait

ABSTRACT

In Kuwait, there are currently two secondary school programs moving in parallel arrangements to serve the increasing number of secondary school students: the General Secondary School Certificate (GSSC), and the Unit Credit System (UCS). This paper compares and contrasts major characteristics of both programs in terms of program objectives and policies, curriculum, teaching methods, student evaluation, and preparation for university admission. It is maintained that both the traditional GSSC and the comparatively new UCS appear to be viable at present. Since both systems follow a planned curriculum from the curriculum department of the Kuwait Ministry of Education, the main differences in the program lie in the distinct and innovative objectives of the UCS. These objectives, which encompass course distribution, teaching methods, and student evaluation, are designed to allow teachers to tailor their teaching methods to suit the individual student's abilities, skills, tendencies, and potentials. Undoubtedly, the UCS is gaining momentum in the Kuwaiti society and educational system. Judgments about its comparative worth should be deferred. It is hoped that the information provided in this document will help educators and university officials appraise the high school records of Kuwaiti students applying for admission to higher education programs in the United States. (RH)

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SECONDARY EDUCATION IN KUWAIT: THE DUAL SYSTEM

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PS 018305

Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting
San Francisco, March 30, 1989

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SECONDARY EDUCATION IN KUWAIT: THE DUAL SYSTEM

Salma B. Khammash

The Ministry of Education in the State of Kuwait strives to provide equal opportunities to foster the best possible comprehensive and integrative growth on the part of its Kuwaiti citizens spiritually, intellectually, morally and socially in light of the nature of the Kuwaiti society and its aspirations. This goal, it is hoped, can be attained through the educational programs and the facilities offered by the school environment in its general educational system.

In the early sixties, and as a result of the expansion of the educational services and the introduction of some new strategies in education, such as the law of compulsory education, the ladder of the general educational system in Kuwait was reorganized into three main cycles: 1) elementary cycle - 4 years, 2) intermediate cycle - 4 years, and 3) secondary cycle - 4 years. In addition to these stages a voluntary two-year kindergarten cycle is available to Kuwait children in the country.

The secondary school program is considered a very important stage in the educational ladder in Kuwait. The first secondary class was strated at the Al-Mubarakiya primary school in 1937, and in 1953-54 the secondary curriculum became independent in the same school. In 1956-57 the Shuwaikh secondary school for boys was opened. Secondary education for women began in 1946-47 in the Qabaliya primary school until the school became a secondary school for girls in 1954. In the ensuing years severalsecondary school for both sexes were opened in different districts of the country, and by 1984-85 there were fifty seven secondary schools in Kuwait (30 male schools, 27 female schools) accommodating about 51400 students.

The aim underlying the establishment of the secondary program in Kuwait is to realize the the objectives that are commensurate with the gneral educational goals of the country, namely; to enable the school to

play a balanced social and educational role, and to prepare students for their future careers and for higher (university) education. Currently in Kuwait there are two secondary school programs moving in parallel arrangement to serve the the increasing number of secondary school students in the country. 1) The General Secondary School Certificate (GSSC), and 2) The Unit Credit System (UCS).

The purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast the major characteristics of both secondary programs in terms of program objectives and policies, curriculum, teaching methods, student evaluation and finally preparation for admission to the university.

1. The General Secondary School Certificate (GSSC)

The secondary school program known as the General Secondary School Certificate (GSSC), often referred to as the traditional system, prevails in the educational systems of the Arab countries including the Gulf States. The objectives of the secondary school program can be summed up as follows:

1. Spiritual Growth: getting the secondary school student to correctly comprehend the Is lamic religion and to develop his/her abilities to prectice the Islamic teachings in worship and in daily life.
2. Mental Growth: acquainting the student with sound thinking and the reality of of integrated knowledge, the appreciation of science and scientists, and the development of the necessary skills to carry on self education.
3. Psychological Growth: getting the learner to realize his/her potential and the abilities that might help develop his/her self-acceptance and the acceptance of others, and the reinforcement of his/her abilities to self-adjust psychologically and socially.
4. Social Growth: getting the student to realize the foundations fundamental to the society and the contemporary problems confronting it, to reinforce positive attitudes towards the homeland, and to enhance his/her abilities in order to participate effectively in meeting the demands of the society.
5. Physical Growth: getting the learner to develop sound healthy habits, and to understand and tolerate physical transformations in his/her body and their requirements during the educational stage.

The school curriculum is therefore designed to recognize these goals in the secondary cycle, and the textbooks in particular are considered to be the main source of scientifically verified information. The school administration is expected to create the most favorable educational environment to realize these goals.

Table 1

GENERAL SECONDARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
FOUR YEAR CURRICULUM*
STATE OF KUWAIT

	Study Plan / Subject	1st Sec.	2nd Sec.	Arts Stream 3rd Sec.	Arts Stream 4th Sec.	Science Stream 3rd Sec.	Science Stream 4th Sec.
	Islamic Studies	3**	2	2	2	2	2
	Arabic Language	7	6	7	8	5	5
	English Language	6	5	7	7	6	5
	French Language	-	-	5	5	-	-
	Mathematics	5	5	1	-	6	6
Science	General Science	3	-	-	-	-	-
Science	Biology	-	2	-	-	2	3
Science	Geology	-	-	-	-	2	-
Science	Physics	-	2	-	-	4	5
Science	Chemistry	-	2	-	-	3	4
Science	Scientific Culture	-	-	1	-	-	-
Arts	Social Sciences	3	3	-	-	-	-
Arts	History	-	-	2	2	-	-
Arts	Geography	-	-	2	2	-	-
Arts	Economics	-	-	2	-	-	-
Arts	Sociology	-	-	1	-	-	-
Arts	Psychology	-	-	-	2	-	-
Arts	Philosophy and Logic	-	-	-	2	-	-
	Practicals & Art Education	2	2	-	-	-	-
	Home Economics (females only)	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Physical Education	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total	Males	31	31	31	31	31	31
Total	Females	33	33	33	33	33	33

*Source: Kuwait Ministry of Education, Secondary Education in Kuwait, (Academic Year 1984/85). Kuwait, 1986, 'Azabic'

**Class-hours per week.

Table 1 above shows the General Secondary School Certificate - four year curriculum plan, the subjects that are offered and the number of class-hours per week for each subject. As in dicated in the table, male students attend thirty one hours per week, while female students study thirty three hours per week -- the two extra period being for home economics. The main subjects that are taught throughout the four years include Islamic studies, Arabic language and English language. Mathematics and Social Sciences are compulsory in the first and second secondary years (9th and 10th grades). Home economics for female students as only and physical education for all students are taught each year of the four-year secondary cycle.

According to the Kuwaiti educational system in the scondary stage in both the government and private schools, students in the third secondary year (11th grade) may follow two main streams of study program; the literary (Arts stream) and the scientific (Science stream). At the end of the fourth year of the secondary program (12th grade) the majority of the secondary school students will sit for the General Secondary School Certificate Examination (GSSCE) administered by the Ministry of Education, in one of the two main streams (branches) -- the Arts or Science.

In the case of the GSSCE - Arts, each student is required to take the examination in eight (8) subjects, whereas in the Science stream the student is required to sit for seven (7) subjects. The subjects and scores (maximum and minimum) for both streams are shown in Table 2 below.

Three major subjects are common to both programs - Islamic studies, Arabic and English Languages and have equal total scores for each stream. Prior to the academic year 1986-87, two of these subjects Islamic studies and English language, had lower minumum passing scores for the GSSCE - Science stream only.

Table 2

GENERAL SECONDARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

GSSCE - Arts		GSSCE - Science	
Subject	Score Max-Min*	Subject	Score Max-Min*
1. Islamic Studies	40-20	1. Islamic Studies	40-20
2. Arabic Language	60-30	2. Arabic Language	60-60
3. English Language	60-30	3. English Language	60-30
4. French Language	40-20	4. Mathematics	100-50
5. History	40-20	5. Physics	80-40
6. Geography	40-20	6. Chemistry	60-30
7. Psychology	40-20	7. Biology	40-20
8. Philosophy and Civics	20-10		
Total	320-160	Total	440-220

*minimum passing score for graduation.

The student's score on the final GSSC examination (given in June of each year) accounts for 75% of the total maximum score for each subject in both streams -- the Arts and Science. For example: out of 60 points for the Arabic Language,45 points or 75% are allocated to the result of the GSSCE, and the remaining 15 points or 25% are based on the daily calss activities and exam results in both semesters of the academic year.** The student's scores on Physical Education (20-10), or Home Economics for females (30-15) do not affect his/her total of the GSSCE for graduation.

The above totals are then converted to percentage scores that are normally used for admission to Kuwait University. Calculation of the percentage score (% score) therefore would be different for either stream of the GSSCE. For example: a total score of 396 in the Science stream will be equal to 90%, whereas a score of 288 will equal to 90% in the Arts stream. A 95% score will equal to 304 points in the Arts, and 419 in the Science stream of the GSSCE.

** In the fall of 1984-85 the Ministry of Education began the two-semester system in all schools of Kuwait. The duration of each semester 15 study weeks plus a week for exams.

2. Secondary School Unit Credit System (UCS)

In the fall of 1978-79 academic year a new program in the secondary school cycle, the "Unit Credit System (UCS)", was introduced by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education in some government schools -- for Kuwaiti students only, to move in parallel arrangement with the traditional system of the General Secondary School Certificate (GSSC). The Unit Credit System (UCS) was initiated in 1978-79 in Sabah Al-Salem government secondary school for boys, and inthe Mansouriya government secondary school for girls in the fall of 1979-80. By 1986 there were eleven government secondary school (5 male, 6 female) using the Unit credit System in Kuwait.

The main objectives of the Unit Credit System include the following:

1. To give the student a bigger share and a better chance to choose for himself/herself the school courses which are mostly akin to his/her tendencies, aptitudes and capabilities with a view to learn these courses thoroughly and in detail.
2. Self Learning. The UCS tries to turn the principle of self-learning into reality. "The significance of self-learning stems from the condition we live in"*. The student in this system is taught to rely on himself/herself to reach the missing facts in his/her researches, and to become accustomed in practicing the scientific method in the pursuit of knowledge.

   Unlike the "traditional secondary system" the GSSC, the curriculum under the Unit Credit System is not included in one single text-book that sould be studied by every student in that level.
3. "To lay emphsis on the meaning of 'work' as something of utmost importance and value in our life, as well as the association of the scientific theory with its application, and the kind of school courses the society virtually needs."*

In its bid to associate theory and practice, and its emphasis

* Directory to Sabah Al-Salem UCS, 1986.

on the value of 'work', the Unit Credit System adopts the following:

a) All students should satisfy the general requirements, i.e: compulsory commercial and technical-practical courses along with mathematics and science.

b) Students who elect technical or commercial majors will take more in-depth studies to qualify them in their post graduate studies (higher education) or in practical life.*

c) Students who elect Science or Mathematics majors, will take course that emphsize the apllied as well as the theoretical aspects of science and mathematics.

d) The UCS study plan open the door wide before the student to study some courses that require special aptitude such as music, sculpture, painting and mechanics.

In general, the Unit Credit System (UCS) allows the student "a perfect job to shoulder responsibility and to rely on himself or herself"* throughout the secondary school stage.

In addition to the general requirements which are a group of basic knowledge courses, the UCS gives the student the chance to choose one of the following majors in accordance with his/her aptitudes, tendencies and capabilities:

1. Islamic Studies Major
2. Arabic Language "
3. English Language "
4. Social Studies "
5. Mathematics "
6. Science "
7. Commercial "
8. Industrial "

Table 3 shows the study plan for each major of the Unit Credit System. A student needs to complete 40 units successfully to graduate and receive his/her high school diploma.

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* Directory to Sabah Al-Salem UCS, 1986.

Table 3

STUDY PLAN IN EACH MAJOR
UNIT CREDIT SYSTEM (UCS)*

No.	Major	General Requirements	Major Requirements		Minor Require-ments	Free Elective Require-ments	Total
			Compulsory	Electives			
1	Islamic Studies	22	5	4	3	6	40
2	Arabic Language	21	5	5	3	6	40
3	English Language	21	5	3	3	8	40
4	Social Studies	23	5	3	-	9	40
5	Mathematics	23	5	3	3	6	40
6	Science	23	6	2	2	7	40
7	Commercial	23	6	4	1	6	40
8	Industrial	23	6	3	-	8	40

* Kuwait Ministry of Education, Directory for Sabah Al-Salem School UCS. Kuwait, 1986, 'Arabic'.

Table 4

UNIT CREDIT SYSTEM (USC)

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS "FOR ALL STUDENTS"**

Department	course Number	Units*	
1. Islamic Education	10	½	(1 unit)
" "	30	½	
2. Arabic Language	10	½	
" "	20	½	
" "	30	½	
" "	40	½	(4 units)
" "	50	½	
" "	60	½	
" "	70	½	
" "	80	½	
3. English Language	10	½	
" "	20	½	
" "	30	½	
" "	40	½	(4 units)
" "	50	½	
" "	60	½	
" "	70	½	
" "	80	½	
4. Mathematics	10	1	
"	20	1	(2 units)
5. Science	10	1	
"	20	1	(3 units)
"	70	1	
6. Social Studies	10	1	
" "	20	1	(2 units)
7. Commercial studies	10	1	(1 unit)
8. Industrial Studies	10	1	(1 unit)
9. Library Studies	10	½	
" "	20	½	(1 unit)
10. Physical Education	10	½	
" "	20	½	
" "	30	½	
" "	40	½	(4 units)
" "	50	½	
" "	60	½	
" "	70	½	
" "	80	½	

*The one-unit course is given 5 times a week, and the half-unit course is given 3 hours a week.

** The total number of general reuirements courses for all students is 23 units. Students whose major is Islamic Studies take 22 units, and 21 units for those majoring in "Arabic" or "English" Language.

Table 4 shows the General Requirement Courses required from all students studying under the Unit Credit System. The data indicate that all students have to take 4 units each of Arabic and English Language as well as 4 units Physical Education. These four units are studied throughout the duration of the four years of the secondary program. Mathematics and Social Studies, each 2 units, are studied during the first two years of the secondary cycle (9th and 10th grades). Science alone requires 3 units and it is offered from the 9th to the 11th grade. Islamic Education of one unit is normally completed during the first year or 1st secondary class. The one-unit course is taught five times a week, while the half-init course is given 3 hours per week. For example: a student will have 45 contact hours per semester in Arabic or English Language, and 75 contact hours in Mathematics in one semester during the 1st or 2nd secondary levels.

A student who has completed less than 10 units is placed in the 1st secondary year (9th grade), if he/she has completed 10 to 19½ units then her/she has finished the 2nd secondary year (10th grade). Third secondary year (11th grade) 20 to 29½ units, and 4th secondary year (12th grade) more than 30 units. The majority of the students complete the 40 units required for graduation during the four-year secondary cycle.

Under the Unit Credit System the teaching methods take certain dimensions, quite different from the teaching methods of "spoon-feeding", "telling" or "lecturing" that are followed in the traditional system schools. For example: in the Arabic Language Department, the teaching methods stress self-sustained efforts, and the association with the practical life. They aim at strengthening further the student's skills in reading as well as in searching for knowledge. The teaching of Arabic language also aims at the actual practice of all elements of the language. The ultimate purpose is to enable the student to use the language properly and accurately -- not only within the limited area of the school, but rather in the larger society outside.

The objectives of teaching the English Language in the UCS do not differ greatly from those in the "traditional" schools. The objectives generally emphasize on aquainting the student with certain linguistic skills, such as the receptive skills (listening and reading), and the productive skills (speaking and writing). The teacher in this system, however, is expected to constantly renovate and tailor his/her teaching methods to best suit his/her students' capabilities and to realize the individual differences among these students.

The assessment and evaluation system used by the Unit Credit System (UCS), is developed to keep a close and constant follow-up of the student's achievements and activities during the school semester. Evaluation procedures are mainly based on oral, practical and written tests, as well as on the research work carried out by the student using the school library and other sources of knowledge. Sixty(60) marks out of a 100 are allocated to the student's daily activities, and the remaining 40 marks are given to the semester's final examination. To pass any school course, the student should score at least 60 marks. At the end of each semester, the student is notified of the results of the courses and the number of units he/she has covered during the semester. Grading uses 4-point system, and credits are given in symbols only as shown below:*

Percentage Mark	Credit	Symbol	Points
From 90 to 100	Excellent	A	4
From 80 to less than 90	Very Good	B	3
From 70 to less than 80	Good	C	2
From 60 to less than 70	Pass	D	1
Less than 60	Fail	F	0

Any student sho receives "poor" or "fail" in a compulsory course, he/she has to take the same course again, whereas if he/she fails an elective course is eligible to either repeat it or take another course instead.

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* Directory to Sabah Al-Salem UCS, 1986.

An achieving student is entitled to be listed in the "Honor List" in case of the following:

- he/she achieves a semester GPA of 3.25 or more,
- the number of units he/she registered for during that semester is not less than 4.5 units, and
- his/her cumulative grade point average (CGPA) is 2.5 or more.

Graduates of Islamic Studies, Arabic Language, English Language, Social Studies or Commercial of the Unit Credit System will be considered equal to graduates of the GSSCE - Arts stream when they apply for admission to Kuwait University. Graduates of the UCS - Mathematics, Science or Industrial will be equated with graduates of the GSSCE - Science stream by the University officials. Moreover, the UCS student's cumulative grade point average (CGPA) is converted to a percent score for admission purposes in order to match the percent-scores of those who graduate from the traditional system -- the GSSC.

In general, and based on the information presented in this paper, the writer believes that both secondary school programs, the "traditional" or the General Secondary School Certificate (GSSC) and the comparatively new system, the Unit Credit System (UCS) appeared to be viable at the present time. Since both systems or programs follow a planned curriculum emanating from one centralized source, namely -- the curriculum department of Kuwait Ministry of Education, the main differences between them therefore, lie in the distinct and innovative objectives of the Unit Credit System (UCS). These objectives encompassing course-distribution, teaching methods, and student evaluation were designed to recognize and meet the individual student's abilities, skills, tendencies and potentials. Unfortunately, these procedures are not exercised or followed in the "traditional" program of the General Secondary School Certificate (GSSC). Undoubtedly, the Unit Credit System is gaining momentum in the Kuwaiti society and its educational system, and it should be allowed to mature before a judgement regarding its existance and continuation can be made in comparison with the well founded and long practiced traditional program known as the General Secondary School Certificate.

Finally, it is hoped that the information provided by this document will be of value to American educators and officials of universities and colleges in clarifying and appraising the records of educational attainments of male and female Kuwaiti students from both secondary school programs who are coming to the United States and other Western countries in large numbers to pursue their studies in higher education.

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